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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 OUAGADOUGOU 001159

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SUBJECT: GUINEA TALKS - 9th ICG-G IN OUAGADOUGOU

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Classified by CDA Dennis Hankins for reason 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. SUMMARY: The 9th meeting of the International Contact Group on Guinea (ICG-G) held December 13 in Ouagadougou was marked by a unified international community and capable leadership from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union (AU), and the UN Representative for West Africa. In the face of an intransigent CNDD delegation (that was taken over by pro-Dadis hardliners at the last minute), the ICG-G issued a strong statement calling for continued sanctions against the National Committee for Democracy and Development (CNDD), an international observer presence during the transition, and the CNDD's agreement not to participate in elections. While a compromise position between the CNDD and the Forces Vives did not appear any closer, the international consensus in clearly against the return of Dadis and in favor of international involvement in the transition period. The declaration pushed mediator Compaore towards a tougher line than he has been willing to pursue up to now. End Summary.

The 9th ICG-Guinea

¶2. (U) The 9th Meeting of the ICG-G took place on December 13th in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. The U.S. was represented by DAS William Fitzgerald and accompanied by the Charge d'Affaires. The meeting was chaired by co-presidents the President of the ECOWAS Commission, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, and the AU Special Envoy Ibrahima Fall. The leadership dais was also shared by the Nigerian Junior Minister of Foreign Affairs Bagudu Hirse and UN SRSG for West Africa Said Djinnit. Delegations included representatives of Burkina Faso, Canada, France, Germany, Japan, Liberia, Libya, Russia, the UK, the European Union Presidency and European Commission, the International Labor Organization, the Francophonie, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and the World Bank. Many groups were represented by their representatives in Conakry.

French and U.S. Share Positions

¶3. (C) A pre-meeting breakfast with the French delegation demonstrated the closeness of the French and U.S. positions regarding the current situation. The French were represented at the ICG by Francois Goldblatt, Ambassador to Burkina Faso, Jean Grabling, Ambassador to Guinea, Stephane Gompertz, MFA Director for Africa and the Indian Ocean, and Charlotte Montel, Africa Advisor at MFA, who saw President Compaore's mediation efforts as weak, and hoped that the events of December 3 would cause Compaore to push the parties toward a solution that would bring a quick election and minimize the role of the CNDD in the country's future. The French share the assessment that Morocco should keep Dadis in country, that any deal

with Dadis is impossible, and that Konate is the better if not sole option for the transition.

14. (C) The French shared the assessment that President Compaore can and should play a more productive role as mediator, and that recent events may lead Compaore to believe that it is in his own political and, perhaps, economic interest to create a solution that does not include Dadis. The French claimed not to have any further information on the location of Dadis' would-be assassin Toumba. The delegation also believed that a clear and firm message delivered to Compaore would be more likely to produce results. The French and U.S. shared some concern that ECOWAS' Chambas has not been a forceful spokesperson for the ICG-G in past meetings and agreed to urge stronger African voices (notably Djinnit) to speak up (Comment: As the meeting progressed this concern was alleviated as all four African voices were strong starting with Chambas who visibly upset the CNDD by publicly calling for an ECOWAS observation and security mission. End Comment).

Co-Chairs stake out a tough opening position

15. (C) In the group's first meeting since the violence of September 28 and the attempted assassination of Moussa Dadis Camara, co-presidents Chambas and Fall laid out a tough opening position. While condemning the events of December 3 in Conakry and "any attempt to destabilize the fragile situation that currently reigns," they cited the "urgency and opportunity of the moment." They described the situation in Guinea as having all necessary ingredients to become "explosive," and suggested the need for an international force to protect civilians and provide humanitarian assistance in Guinea, a suggestion which visibly rankled the CNDD. The chairs also stated bluntly that impunity for repeated human rights violation in Guinea

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would not remain unpunished.

Forces Vives see Guinea as "Stateless"

16. (U) The Forces Vives were first to discuss their position with the ICG-G and to take questions. The Forces Vives condemned the prevailing situation in the country, which they categorized as a complete lack of both liberty and personal security. They claimed to be heartened by steps taken by Sekouba Konate as the new interim leadership of the CNDD over the last several days, and believed Sekouba was someone that they could work with. They were surprised and disappointed to see the CNDD delegation was composed of hard liners tied to Dadis and not by the more moderate figures who had been expected (indeed, the CNDD delegation was headed by Col. Moussa Keita -- one of the most virulent and explosive of Dadis' cadre).

17. (C) The Forces Vives condemned the attack on President Dadis, but when asked directly by the French, they stated their belief that there would be greater opportunity for progress if he were to remain in Morocco. They claimed that while they had compassion for the wounded, they had far greater compassion for the Guinean people. The Forces Vives very clearly declared their support for an international presence (a "third force") in Guinea that would help to ensure the peace throughout a transition period, and maintained their insistence that the CNDD (described as "those who had murdered and raped") not participate in any future elections. The Forces Vives expressed their appreciation for the mediation efforts of President Compaore and the ongoing work of the ICG, but asked that the group make a strong condemnation of the prevailing situation rather than pointing timidly at the problem.

CNDD takes an early break and a hard line

18. (SBU) Perturbed by the opening statements of the ICG Presidency and reportedly miffed that the ICG met with the Forces Vive before them, the CNDD departed the conference center as soon as the opening

session concluded. The ICG then waited for hours for the CNDD "rewrite" their response before returning to the negotiations, and were met with a deeply entrenched position. A sneering and bellicose Col Moussa Keita stated plainly that the presence of any international force, whatever its makeup, on Guinean soil would be considered an attack on Guinea's sovereignty and a declaration of war. Keita claimed that the CNDD was itself capable of managing a peaceful, transparent transition to democracy while protecting the Guinean public. Their only goal, he claimed, was to construct a base for economic growth, peace, and free elections.

¶9. (SBU) The CNDD delegation explained that the December 3 attack on Dadis had made the context of negotiations more difficult and had rendered the ICG's goal of election in the first half of 2010 unfeasible. They confirmed that they were willing to work through the ICG to find a solution to the crisis, but insisted that any effort to restrict any group from participation in any eventual elections remained completely unacceptable, and would be detrimental to the ideal of a fully-inclusive Guinean democracy. With the speaking role shifting between delegation members, the group decried sanctions on Guinea as both in violation of international law and counterproductive in encouraging peace and stability. The group strongly reiterated their complete confidence in President Compaore in his role as mediator.

¶10. (U) Chambas told the CNDD representation to understand the new democratic mood in Africa. Chambas said that military rule in the region had led to too many catastrophes, and that militaries must stay out of politics. He stated that no one can be happy with the current situation of democracy and governance in Guinea, and that despite CNDD's claim that it would be a "referee" in the new Guinea, it has failed to ensure the safety of the population and its ability to restore democracy is questionable. Chambas stated that the "stories" coming out of the country relating to human rights abuses made an international force necessary. It was, continued Chambas, in no way an invasion, simply an offer of assistance to the people of Guinea.

An Awkward Intervention African Mediators to Step Up

¶11. (U) he Representative of the Libyn controlled Community of Sahel-Saharan States (EN-SAD) intervened to take issue with what he peceived to be the imposition of unacceptable restrictions on the sovereign state of Guinea by the ICG. After a long tirade -

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questioning the ICG's existence, claiming that the CNDD saved Guinee after Conteh, tossing accusations of inappropriate interference in Guinea's affairs at the co-presidents, the representative of Nigeria, and the non-African states participating in the ICG - the representatives of the CNDD delivered a hearty round of applause while other members of the ICG seemed surprised at the outburst.

Group maintains unity

¶12. (C) Throughout the negotiations, the international community was by and large on the same footing. The absence of Dadis was viewed as an opportunity by the vast majority of the membership of the ICG. There was very little divergence between the positions of the international organization, the African states, the Europeans, and the U.S. The gaps were especially minimal between the U.S., France, and the UK. Because of this unity, the ICG was able to offer a strong statement -- one that most consciously saw as a call for Burkinabe President Compaore to take a more dynamic and aggressive stance than has been seen to date. Most of the negotiation over the text was over semantics, not substance. The text includes a renewed call for elections as soon as possible in 2010, the CNDD agreement not to participate in those elections, and international presence in Guinea to ensure the peace.

¶13. (C) Comment: The meeting allowed the international community to take stock of the situation following the December 3 attempt on Dadis' life. The ability of the Dadis hard liners to seize control

of the CNDD delegation worked against them -- only convincing the African leadership through their belligerent manner that there can be no solution involving Dadis. The situation demonstrated a remarkable degree of international solidarity -- unfortunately coupled by a general disappointment with President Compaore's mediation that is seen both as timid and too prone to meet CNDD demands.

¶14. (U) This cable has been cleared by DAS Fitzgerald.

¶15. (U) Conakry Minimize Considered.

HANKINS